"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"

WAR SUFFERERS' RELIEF BULLETIN

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Laying Bricks and Sawing Boards
In the Name of Christ

Henry S. Detweiler

The first Reconstruction and Transport Unit to be sent out by the M. C. C. arrived in Holland on May 28, 1946. Thus a new form of relief activity got under way, that of laying bricks and sawing boards all "In the Name of Christ." The selected area of operations for this unit is Walcheren Island. Damage to property on the island was very severe and widespread, caused by shellfire together with bombing operations from the air to break open the dikes. This latter course of action, that of flooding the island, was used to dislodge the German army from their heavy fortifications. Great progress along reconstruction lines has been made, but there is much work remaining before the island is restored to its pre-war beauty and fertility. To everyone's surprise, the land that was flooded with ocean salt water is again growing crops. The salt water killed off all trees and bushes it touched. These have been or are being cut down and removed, and their absence is very noticeable. Houses and barns can be rebuilt and repaired in a short time, but it took twenty to thirty years to grow some of those trees. Plans are under way to plant trees on a large scale all over the island, and the R. T. U. H. hopes to participate in this project at the proper time, buying young trees with funds earned on the project and then planting them on properties which we repair or reconstruct, or at other designated spots.

The Unit Personnel

consists of eleven men, gathered together from the States and Canada, who represent three branches of the Mennonite Church. These men have all served over three years in C.P.S. or its Canadian counterpart, and have now volunteered for two years service in this phase of relief work. Most of the men come from farm backgrounds, although several have worked and acquired skills in the building trades. The unit is set up in its own camp, complete with buildings for dormitory, messing, garage, and storage. Most of the foodstuffs used by the unit are secured from food stocks sent in from the States and Canada by the M.C.C. This is done in order not to draw on local supplies, many of which are still rather short. We buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season and basic foodstuffs needed in the preparation of meals. One of the unit members has full time work in the kitchen and keeping the quarters in order. The meals follow typical American tastes, are pleasingly and appetizingly prepared and served. In addition to their work on the project, the men show a splendid cooperative spirit by continuously volunteering to help with the chores around the camp, washing and drying dishes, sawing and splitting firewood, washing windows, sweeping out quarters and walks, making their own beds each morning, etc.

Equipment

of the unit includes three jeeps, three large cargo trucks, and one jeep trailer. Local transport on the island is very scarce, thus the need for our own vehicles. The jeeps are used to transport unit per-

sonnel, and together with the trailer, to haul small quantities of materials where it wouldn't be practical to use the large trucks. The trucks are used to transport building materials such as concrete, sand, bricks, lumber, also haul water for camp use and on the project. These vehicles were secured from the U.S. Army surplus stocks. They have been repainted free of charge by a Dutch Mennonite paint manufacturer, the M.C.C. name and insignia placed on each vehicle.

The Project

Our first assignment was rather difficult, but everyone was anxious to get started and went at the work with determination and the will to do a good job. The property was a two family, one and one-half story, brick dwelling with a barn attached to the one end. Most of the damage to this particular dwelling was caused by concussion of exploding bombs when they were bombing the dikes. The red tile roof had been raised by the force of the explosions and dropped out of position, one of the main cross supports cracked. The roof had to be jacked up with our hydraulic jack, propped in its raised position, the new cross support fitted into place. The outer wall had been cracked by the force of the explosions, and had to be torn down to a point below all the cracks and then rebuilt. During this process of tearing down the cracked walls, care had to be exercised in order to keep breakage of the bricks to a minimum. Building materials are precious and whatever can be salvaged is used again in the repairs and reconstruction. The bricks that were taken down had to be cleaned off and used again in building up the new walls. Lumber and glass are especially scarce as these items must be imported from other countries. New window frames and sash had to be placed. When the walls were built up to the proper height the roof was lowered into position again. Boards had been smashed, knocked loose, or lost and thus had to be replaced. Wooden rain troughs had to be constructed and attached to the eaves. All this work was complicated by the fact that very little in the way of new materials is available. But that is the condition of the available materials, nothing can be done about it, we try to make the best of it and are thankful this much is available to carry on the work.

Home of the Builders' Unit in Holland

During this stage of the general reconstruction program throughout Holland, work is being performed on dwellings. Housing is very scarce, families living together and concentrated in the larger villages and towns. Thus in the work on this particular property, although the barn is in a very sad state, we will not do any of that type of work until the housing shortage has been relieved throughout the island. On the project we are under the supervision of the Dutch governmental reconstruction bureau called the Wederopbouw. This bureau has an area supervisor on the field that gives on-the-project direction, what repairs or reconstruction work shall be done, how and in what order, inspection of finished work. Our particular supervisor speaks some English and has been very patient, friendly, co-operative, and helpful. It is true that in a few instances, because of inadequate experience and skill, work done by the unit members had to be torn down and rebuilt in the correct manner. But these instances are few and far between, and teach a lesson to all concerned in a vivid manner. The Wederopbouw keeps an inventory of materials that go into each job, so that proper charges can be made. The type of work

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that the R.T.U.H. will do for the remainder of 1946 will be the same as here described. By the end of this year the government hopes to complete the repairing of homes that are damaged but still standing. Then in 1947 they hope to start rebuilding the homes that were completely blown up by shell or bomb, or flattened by the tides when the island was flooded. According to authentic figures, of the 19,000 houses on the island, 4,000 have been completely destroyed, and 8,000 severely damaged. From these figures it is fairly evident that there is much work to be done on this small island. Much has been accomplished already, but a lot more remains to be done.

Camp Life

Perhaps a few glimpses of the camp life would be interesting. The water used in camp must be brought in from the neighboring town of Zoutelande. A cistern has been sunk into the ground outside the messing building, and a suction pump installed in the kitchen. This saves a lot of water carrying. The drinking water is stored in a large steel tank above ground. This is one of the hundreds of similar tanks left behind by the retreating German army and can be seen on practically every farm or village property in the area. The wells all over the island are now salted from the flooding. Water is piped to central areas from the mainland and then each property owner must secure his needs from the closest source. There is no electricity in the area where our camp is located, so our lighting system is a pair of kerosene pressure lamps in each building. Hours off the project are usually very fully occupied and busy. Washing and drying dishes after meals are left to volunteer help (never lacking). Swimming in the near-by sea is handy for those hardy enough to withstand the cold water. Softball equipment was brought along but its use is limited due to the impossibility of finding a field large enough to carry on a game. The fields are surrounded by drainage ditches and since they aren't very large to begin with, the result is that almost every batted ball goes into the water. The two main sources of diversion or "inspiration," whichever the case may be, are the old-fashioned bull session and letter writing. When one is far from home sending and receiving letters assumes major importance.

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Thinking about Relief

Ultimate Objectives

While we do not know what the future holds in store, it is possible that a new epoch of missions is opening to the Mennonite Church. World War I, followed by a second within two decades, may have the effect of leaving Europe sick of the way of hate. Their hearts may be opened to genuine Christianity. When they discover that they have been holding to an emasculated Christianity which did not curb the natural passion of hate, they may take a fresh hold on true Biblical Christianity. Our workers have splendid opportunities of sharing the Gospel while they are sharing the necessities of life. Their contacts are vital and are building up a confidence in the integrity of our motives and in the truth of our Faith.

Schooled so long to hatred men may have forgotten that there is such a thing as love. Faith in the midst of adversity requires courage, and living examples of genuine faith will inspire the same in others. Despair is banished in the presence of one who suffers with and for others.

Meanwhile the Mennonite Church of America should be engaged very definitely in prayer that the Lord may open this door of service. If the burden of prayer rests heavily upon us, most assuredly the Lord will open a great door and effectual to the Church. It is also possible that the Lord will place this burden upon some young people who in the meantime will prepare for such service. There is the task of preaching the old-fashioned Gospel to the common people and of leading them back to a living faith in God. There is also a great work that needs to be done among the intellectuals, which will require sufficient learning to meet them on their own ground. The religious background of the European struggle is higher criticism and an unevangelical theology. A wide and thorough preparation, including study of modern languages, philosophy, science, and especially of theology, is needed for such a task. In either case the need for a genuine Christian experience is paramount.—Chester K. Lehman.

Peace is the fruit of the Christian Gospel; peace is the fruit of regenerated individual lives saturated in prayer.—Don Smucker

LAYING BRICKS

(Continued from preceding page)

The religious life

of the unit is active and healthy. Each day is begun with morning devotions around the breakfast table. Wednesday evening of each week is reserved for prayer meeting. Every Sunday morning the unit attends church services at the Doopsgezinde church in either Middelburg or Vlissingen. In the evening there is always an evening worship (Sunday) service and hymn sing at the camp. Members of the Doopsgezinde churches are sometimes invited to join us in these Sunday evening services. In these services and devotions, each member of the unit takes his regular turn as leader. From time to time, the unit attends conferences in this area held by the Doopsgezinde churches. Thus we get to know our Dutch co-religionists better, and are able to fellowship together. Acquaintances and neighbors drop in from time to time to meet the unit members and see the camp.

Local contacts

with the Dutch people have been somewhat limited, but now that the men are out on the project they meet the people who are to move into the homes they are rebuilding. The unit members are studying the Dutch language, gradually building up a vocabulary and confidence in the use of this new language. The Dutch people are very friendly and hospitable. One day the women of the household that will move into the first house we worked on, the mother and daughter, bicycled out from their temporary home in Zoutelands, dressed in their quaint, distinctive, Walcheren style. They came to see the progress being made on their home, also to serve tea, cookies, and chocolate candy to the members of the unit at work. They prepared the tea at a neighbor's house, brought it to where the unit was working, set the cups out on the saw bucks standing outside, and served to everyone present. We weren't able to talk much with them at that time, but the area supervisor happened to be on the scene at that time and jokingly told them that we didn't care for tea, that Englishmen liked tea and Americans preferred coffee. We tried to convey our appreciation for the friendly gesture and thanks for the tea as best we could with our limited knowledge of the language, but they promised to be back some other time with coffee. These day to day contacts are important to the full work of the unit, learning to know the people we are helping, and letting them learn to know us better. In this way we hope to let our witness for Christ shine out and touch those with whom we come in contact. Just working with our backs and hands "In the Name of Christ" is not enough. It is through the personal contacts with the people, one might call it the pluses, that will fulfill our visions and concepts of this work and make it full and complete for those whom we seek to serve or help, for ourselves, and we pray pleasing in the sight of our Lord whom we seek to serve at all times.

Correspondence with Dutch Mennonites

A contact between the Mennonite youths of America and those of Holland promises to be significant in renewing their peace testimony and ours as well. About 175 Mennonite youths of Holland have sent their names and addresses to this country, asking that they be given to American Mennonite youths who are interested in corresponding. This is not merely for the sake of social correspondence, but rather a sharing of spiritual experiences.

The Dutch youth leader, Johan Hilverda, writes, "Great typical Mennonite things as nonresistance and soberness in the way of living, etc., we have lost . . . so that there is not much difference between us and other protestants . . . . Now in the last five years of war and cruelty and terrible hunger and death and sorrow we have learned all again what it means to bear arms, what war means . . . . But now there is a strong and burning movement, among our young men and women especially, that wants to accept again the old principles of our fathers . . . . Perhaps you can understand how we, young people, were gladly surprised when we heard about your attitude in wartime. I hope it may be so that our Mennonite church in Holland will now stand upon the threshold of a new future, and that God will give us strength and love to stay so warm and close to Jesus and to the Gospels as the terribleness of these five years have brought us . . . (I hope) that the fellowship between us and our brethren over the Atlantic will be strong and pure, and that it may help to build the Kingdom of God."

An outpatient clinic where patients are treated for various diseases and ailments

History of Our Relief Program in India

Martin Schrag

On the basis of a report received from the Mennonite India mission field, M.C.C. member, Bro. W. S. Unruh, at the annual M.C.C. meeting January 1942, mentioned the possibility of investigating the relief needs of India. The M.C.C. unanimously agreed that the needs in India were within their concern and accordingly instructed the Secretary to contact the various Mennonite and Brethren in Christ missions suggesting a meeting at which time an organization could be effected among the missions for the purpose of information and also administration. The missions responded favorably and the first representative meeting was held at Champa, April 9, 1942. Besides effecting an organization known as the Mennonite Relief Committee of India (M.R.C.I.), they adopted a constitution, and discussed the relief situation. Resolutions were passed giving each mission relief funds to take care of local needs.

A very definite need presented itself in the fall of 1942 when a cyclone and tidal wave struck a portion of Bengal Province destroying many lives and homes and damaging crops. M.R.C.I. representatives investigated the area and although there was a desire to give aid directly, the shortage of personnel did not allow such a program and resulted in the giving of funds to responsible agencies already operating in the area. Despite all efforts conditions continued to deteriorate and by September 1943 severe famine raged in and around Calcutta. Despite the shortage of personnel, the M.R.C.I. felt compelled to give aid directly and by October they committed themselves to an independent program. This program was the result of investigations by the M.R.C.I. and also due to the efforts of J. D. Graber and Sam Goering, travelling M.C.C. commissioners. Each mission was asked to supply workers for the project. This type of an arrangement resulted in a lack of continuity and direction and therefore the M.C.C. was asked to send at least two full time workers to India. A. C. Brunk and J. D. Graber began organizing the work; the latter was soon called home.

For the nature of the relief work setup at this time, the following quotation is given from a report of S. M. King, "Old" Mennonite missionary. "From the beginning we have been distributing rice and clothing and those suffering from malaria have also been given quinine. For the last few months we have also been giving

milk to babies and children. This milk was shipped from the U.S.A. to the Friends Ambulance Unit in Calcutta from whom we received our supply without cost. Cloth and clothing have been purchased at very reasonable rates and the Sisters' Sewing Circles of our Indian Church have made a number of garments for distribution . . . . At present about 8,000 people are receiving help from our organization. . . . In addition to the above we have recently opened a work camp and hospital. . . . The purpose of this camp is to provide work for the poor as they become fit for manual labour."

The request for M.C.C. workers found first fruit in F. J. Isaac, outgoing missionary loaned to the M.C.C. for a six-month period. Isaac began directing the work in June of 1944 and carried forth the work as given above in the quotation. The latter part of 1944 and the first part of 1945 saw bettering conditions and the need for direct relief was rapidly falling off. Most of the agencies working in the area were ending their work and the M.R.C.I. was gradually drawing its program to a close. Some thought was being given at this time to ending M.C.C. aid in India.

However, because Calcutta was near the war front (Burma), because Calcutta was the base for expected Chinese M.C.C. operation, because of the possibility of doing work in some part of the East Indies, and because of the great rehabilitation need in Bengal it was decided to continue efforts in India. This meant more workers and in the summer and fall of 1944 four workers were sent, two of which hoped later to enter China. Harold Sherk, director of the unit, R. C. Kaufman, Clayton Beyler, and Lawrence Burkholder comprised the unit.

The first task of the new unit was to organize a new program. Direct relief was no longer necessary and so the program was built around the rehabilitation needs of the people in Bengal. R. C. Kaufman was loaned to Bengal Christian Council Relief Committee as its director. The other three organized a program which included building and rebuilding of houses which had deteriorated during the flood and famine, distribution of clothing, organization of an industrial school, distribution of multi-vitamin tablets and anti-malaria as well as other medical aid, milk distribution and later set up a dispensary in Bihar aiding flood refugees as well as supply materials for fishermen to make nets and boats. The program touched from 2,000 to 3,000 people monthly.

Upon the arrival of the four workers the administrative responsibility passed from the R.C.I. to the M.C.C. unit with the M.R.C.I. serving in advisory capacity.

As the above projects were being carried out, some being completed, the need of supplementary help at the various mission stations was suggested and with the visit of O. O. Miller such suggestions crystallized into the following recommendation passed by the M.R.C.I.: "That the Director, J. Harold Sherk, with the assistance of M.R.C.I. be asked to plan a program of transition from the present terminating program in Bengal famine relief to one envisioning continuing interests, needs and concerns, including economic uplift, of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Missions." In accordance with the resolution Sherk visited the five mission stations in the next few months discussing at each station the supplementary aid needed and desired. The report of Sherk's visit was then sent to the M.C.C., which reviewed it at the annual meeting in December of 1945. After some discussion the suggested program was passed favorably subject only to the need in India, the desire of the missions in India, and foreign mission boards.

The program envisioned the sending of about a dozen workers with qualifications and skills needed at the different mission stations. The list of desired personnel is to be arrived at between M.C.C. director and the different mission stations. As the list is matched with individuals in the U. S., they will be sent to India and loaned to the mission station on terms acceptable to both parties. At present 10 workers have been selected and have been sent or are in the process.

Christian relief demands not only the gift of funds but also the gift of personality for administration. To be satisfactory it must be so conducted as to have permanent value, to have a positive influence on character, and to be properly related to the whole Christian program.—S. F. Pannabecker

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If people are children of God and regard themselves as stewards of all that they have, money will have no dangers for them.—J. C. Wenger

Notes from the Field

Italy

This month has been particularly trying in many ways. The weather has become hot, making the work more difficult. the people here having no work to keep them occupied, become more on edge in such weather. This calls for increased effort to steer clear a course in dealing with them. There were several days when the work was most trying but looking back I see that it was due to many factors over which I had no control.—Howard Blosser.

Many of the people in our camps are willing to discuss spiritual things; others feel that the New Testament is not for them and say they cannot believe because of what they have suffered. I had a very unusual experience of finding a young man and wife who have been converted and who have a deep faith in Christ. They felt that I was sent of God to talk to them about spiritual things. They asked how they might be baptized and how they might be able to go to some country and community and live among Protestant Christians.—Maria Kroeker.

France

John Fretz, Madeline Garber and Nettie Glick visited six communities and made distributions of "love gifts" in Lorraine. These distributions were made at the churches, and about 160 families received gifts. Two weeks previous to this distribution John gave cards to the ministers of these churches. These cards announced the distribution date and extended an invitation to the families. The gifts consisted mainly of peaches and meat. The chief need was for clothing but there were a few in need of food, some also being in need of kitchen utensils. These people are living in huts and are very much in need of reconstruction work. One home visited contained only a few items such as: 1 knife, 1 plate, 3 spoons, 1 dipper, 2 stew pans, a bench and a stove. These homes have been looted and they are left with practically nothing, and are in need of immediate assistance.

Belgium

During the month sixty camps and two hospitals were visited. At each camp I left books and other useful items. I thought it both interesting and significant that, when leaving, many of the men rather than stressing appreciation for the books or other material, usually said "thank you for visiting us." Man does not live by bread alone! The inner life also needs nourishment.

In the camps I'm stressing a participation of the youth in athletic and handicraft programs. Normal youth need no prompting, but there are those whose inner world of ideals and values have collapsed. Some of the camp leaders say that these youth spend their leisure time just lying about on their beds. For these, I believe sound therapy lies in the possibility for these youth to discover new satisfactions in life. I am convinced one of the most valuable, as well as difficult, areas of our work lies within this area of helping the youth gain a new faith—a Christian way of life.—Delmar Wedel.

At Driel our distribution was held in a bombed-out church building with the four walls still standing, but no roof overhead except in the vestibule, where we had stored the supplies until time of distribution. The people came in the back entrance of the church close to where the altar had stood and Ruth set up her table to collect the ration cards and then the people wandered through a narrow path made in the debris to the vestibule where we gave them their flour and prunes. In spite of their hardships the people are finding their way back to normal and they told us that the next few weeks they hoped to start repairs on the church, but the only part left to start with is the floor and walls, as everything else is gone. It challenges us when we see the enthusiasm and vigor with which these people work even though everything, so it seems, must be against them. They are always so appreciative of the things which we do for them.—Charles Cocanower.

The accumulation of more reliable information has brought to light the fact that there were over 20,000 Japanese subjects confined in Concentration Camps inside Japan proper alone, for their resistance to war.—From **Worldover Press**

If one is filled with the love of God he will be a good peacemaker.—J. C. Wenger

The poem which follows was read by Reta (Kufske) Bean as her parting testimony at a farewell service held at Akron, Pa., on August 20, 1946.

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
  Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow
  Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
  Of My command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
  And as thou goest all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest—then go forward boldly,
  One step is far enough for faith to see:
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee;
  For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear thine adversaries counting,
  Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
  For I, the strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee;
  Having my promise, needing nothing more,
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
  In all thy journeying I go before.

—Selected.